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Social Technologies Paper

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To completely analyze concerns regarding the current innovations of social networking sites, one must address a variety of issues. How valuable and necessary is research into the virtual communication methodologies? How does consumption of the technologies support the need for research and future development? What should the focus of communications research be directed towards for those who are currently and those who are not currently connected?

Recent research by this author (2008) indicated a need for future research of social networking usage in the undergraduate college environment. A 27-item survey to access what, if any, cyberbullying was occurring on the college campus was distributed to 120 undergraduate students in the social science, technology, and education departments. Up to 34 percent of respondents had been cyberbullied. The majority of all respondents (54%) and one hundred percent of the male respondents indicated they knew someone who had been cyberbullied. Cell phones, Facebook, and instant messaging were the primary forms of technology used to perpetrate cyberbullying. When one considers the ability of individuals to surreptitiously bully others via technology; the emotional impact of anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation that has been reported as feelings that victims of bullying experience; and the alarming incidences of school shootings where the victims and perpetrators report suffering from bullying behavior, it is evident that this is one area of research that is essential.

Daniel Pink (2006) clearly stated a need for continued growth in the field of creative, collaborative individuals. Pink's research into the changing economic nature of the world indicated that those who do not embrace a more empathetic synergy in the work world might find their careers outsourced to areas such as India, the Philippines, and China. A report by the Information Technology and

Innovation Foundation recently found that the United States has not progressed in improving higher education and the next generation of workers (Kincaid, 2009).

When used properly, social networking sites and other current Web 2.0 technologies enable individuals to collaborate and create without the boundaries of brick and mortar buildings. Therefore, it seems that future research invested into areas of educational uses for communication technologies would be the most beneficial to the majority of people. To understand the areas of research that would be helpful, one must contemplate the current research regarding today's education consumers.

Today's students are far different than those of just a generation ago. These digital natives are "FUNDAMENTALLY different from previous generations in the way they think, in the way they access, absorb, interpret, process and use information and above all, in the way they view, interact and communicate in and with the modern world" (Jukes, 2008, p.11). Jukes also quotes Marc Prensky in his assessment of children today operating at "twitch speed," expecting and wanting instant access to information and services with a series of mouse clicks anytime, day or night. (p. 9) When considering these differences, the onset of new Web 2.0 and communication technologies are essential to address their educational needs and interests. Ted McCain (2005) suggested a six-step process to teach the digital native for independent and higher learning: "resist the temptation to tell; stop teaching decontextualized content; stop giving students the final product of our thinking; make a fundamental shift to problems first, teaching second; progressively withdraw from helping students; and reevaluate evaluation" (p. 44).

Blogs, wikis, and podcasts are a few of the Web 2.0 technologies that students benefit from utilizing in the classroom setting. For example, this educator provided a student-driven, teacher-facilitated educational setting for students while learning about American History. A wiki was used, [rockinrevolution.pbworks.com](http://rockinrevolution.pbworks.com), to allow students the independence of studying the Industrial Revolution. Though not much different than a pen and paper assignment, the addition of a learning environment centered on a computer with the Internet motivated the students to be much more

independent, excited learners. Additionally, the students taught each other the concepts of the Great Depression by creating “Fireside Podcasts” of the information in the chapter. Not only were they collaborating in teams to teach the other students the chapter content, they also taught each other how to download and add the podcasts to their iPods.

A social networking site can also motivate students to contribute more to class written assignments. A Ning that was added to my son’s 11<sup>th</sup> grade English class provided the Internet based environment that students embrace while discussing books that may otherwise be viewed as tedious.

In his presentation, Ian Jukes (2008) quoted John Medina, from *Brain Rules: 12 Principles for Surviving and Thriving at Home, Work, and School*, with research indicating that the brain is designed to process content visually more than with any other sense. Figures of 30 percent for visual processing and only 3 percent for auditory processing were quoted. This opens the door for research into the addition of visual Web 2.0 learning tools such as Vodcasts, VoiceThread, and Digital Storytelling with other video-based media. Three dimensional animation learning environments such as Second Life, Thinking Worlds, and Quest 3D could also provide the interactive, student-driven, creative environments that Pink, McCain and others are calling for in the education of our youth.

The One Laptop Per Child (2009) initiative of “creating educational opportunities for the world’s poorest children” opens new doors for collaboration worldwide. Therefore, while the proliferation of self-centered technology innovations may be reaching a nauseating level, it is essential to embrace the concepts behind these innovations to improve our education of students throughout the world. Research into these areas of technology will benefit all people on the planet, both in education learned and advancements gained through more motivated, creative, and passionate students.

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